



National Deaf History Month Celebrates Milestones, Achievements

National Deaf History Month, March 12-April 15, recognizes the contributions of deaf and hard of hearing individuals to American society by commemorating milestones in deaf history.

KCDHH is proud to celebrate the rich heritage of Deaf Americans and encourages everyone to carry that history with them," says Executive Director, Liz Hill.

National Deaf History Month spans parts of two months because it highlights three important events in American deaf history. These defining dates remind us of how far people who are deaf and hard of hearing have come in the last century, and the important contributions of the deaf community to our country.

Three dates commemorated by the national observation include:

- ✓ **March 13, 1988** – The victory of the “Deaf President Now” movement when students at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. staged a protest demanding the first deaf president for the university;
- ✓ **April 8, 1864** – The signing of the charter for Gallaudet University by President Abraham Lincoln establishing a college for the deaf; and
- ✓ **April 15, 1817** – The founding of the first public school for the deaf, American School for the Deaf, by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet.

Interesting Facts:

- ❖ Lon Chaney was born in Colorado Springs Colorado on April 2, 1883 to deaf parents. He is best remembered for his characterization of tortured, often grotesque and afflicted characters and his groundbreaking artistry with film makeup. Chaney was a pioneer in such horror films as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (silent version) and most notably *The Phantom of the Opera*. Chaney was a lifelong supporter of the deaf community although he was not deaf.
- ❖ For inspiration, one needs look no further than the story of Helen Keller. Here was a deafblind woman who, despite the loss of her sight and hearing as a toddler and the obstacles of her time, learned to read, write, and speak. Plus, she graduated cum laude from college as the first deafblind person to ever do so.

- ❖ Dr. Andrew Foster was a deaf African American man who made a major impact with his life's work. Not only did he establish many schools for the deaf in Africa, he was also the first African American to graduate from Gallaudet University (then Gallaudet College). Unfortunately, Foster was taken from this world in 1987 at the relatively young age of 62.
- ❖ Deaf entertainers of today include, but are not limited to; Michelle Banks, Linda Bove, Deanne Bray, Amy Ecklund, Lou Ferrigno, Phyllis Frelich, C.J. Jones, Marlee Matlin, Anthony Natale, Howie Seago, Christy Smith, Terrylene, and Shoshanna Stern.
- ❖ Heather Whitestone was the first deaf Miss America.
- ❖ American Sign Language (ASL) is a language with its own grammar, structure, vocabulary and syntax. It is primarily used in the United States and Canada. ASL is the third most used language in the U.S. Signed English, Manually Coded English and other sign systems have been developed over the years to help deaf students learn English, but these are not languages, but merely codes that use some ASL signs to represent English.
- ❖ There are hundreds of sign language dialects in use around the world. Each culture has developed its own form of sign language to be compatible with the language spoken in that country.
- ❖ Ninety percent of deaf children are born to hearing parents, which means that they often do not have early exposure to language.
- ❖ Each year, approximately three out of 1,000 babies born in the United States have a detectable hearing loss, which can affect their speech, language, social, and cognitive development.
- ❖ The term "hearing impaired" is not a politically correct term. Most individuals prefer "deaf" or "hard of hearing" as these terms do not imply brokenness of any kind.
- ❖ The field of deafness has become so rich with history and culture that there is a growing field of study called deaf studies. In deaf studies, people learn about deaf history, deaf culture, deaf education, sign language, linguistics and communication, psychology, deaf literature, and the deaf community.

For more information:

<http://www.deafpeople.com>

<http://www.signgenius.com/famous-deaf-people/introduction.shtml>

<http://deafness.about.com/od/articlesandnewsletters/a/historydeaf.htm>

<http://archives.gallaudet.edu/Timeline.htm>

If you need more information about services for deaf or hard of hearing individuals in Kentucky, please contact:



632 Versailles Rd.
Frankfort, KY 40601
(800) 372-2907 (V/T)
(502) 573-2604 (V/T)

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Helen Keller image credit:
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Gallaudet University
http://www.stateuniversity.com/universities/DC/Gallaudet_University.html

Marlee Matlin
<http://agrealitytv.wordpress.com/2008/04/22/elimination-5-no-more-marlee/>